

Message Text

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SUBJECT: ICNAF SPECIAL MEETING MONTREAL

REF: A. STATE 193300; B. OTTAWA 3299

1. FOLLOWING IS TEXT OF CANADIAN AIDE-MEMOIRE REFERRED TO IN REF B. CANADIANS ALSO WILL BE SENDING LETTERS FROM CANADIAN FOREIGN MINISTER TO ICNAF FOREIGN MINISTERS AND FROM CANADIAN FISHERIES MINISTER TO ICNAF FISHERIES MINISTERS.

2. BEGIN TEXT: AT A SPECIAL MEETING SCHEDULED FOR MONTREAL FROM SEPTEMBER 22-28, 1975, THE INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION FOR THE NORTHWEST ATLANTIC FISHERIES (ICNAF) WILL BE CONSIDERING PROPOSALS FOR IMPROVEMENTS IN ICNAF CONSERVATION PROGRAMS IN WATERS OFF THE CANADIAN ATLANTIC COAST. THESE PROPOSALS, FIRST PRESENTED BY CANADA AT ICNAF'S ANNUAL MEETING IN EDINBURGH IN JUNE 1975 INCLUDE REQUESTS FOR A FORTY PERCENT REDUCTION IN EFFORT ON GROUND FISH STOCKS IN ICNAF SUB-AREAS 2, 3 AND 4 BY NATIONS OTHER THAN THE COASTAL STATE, REDUCTION OF TOTAL ALLOWABLE CATCH LIMITS FOR CERTAIN STOCKS IN CRITICAL CONDITION, AND INCREASED ALLOCATION TO CANADA OF QUOTAS FOR A NUMBER OF STOCKS OF VITAL INTEREST TO THIS COUNTRY.

AGREEMENT ON THE CANADIAN PROPOSALS WAS NOT REPEAT NOT REACHED AT THE EDINBURGH MEETING. SINCE THEN CANADA HAS FURTHER ELABORATED ITS PROPOSAL ON EFFORT LIMITATION, AND ICNAF SCIENTISTS ARE RE-EXAMINING DATA ON THE STATUS OF THOSE STOCKS FOR WHICH CANADA BELIEVES LOWER CATCH LIMITS ARE URGENTLY NEEDED. WITH THIS FURTHER INFORMATION IT IS HOPED THAT ICNAF MEMBER COUNTRIES AT THE MONTREAL MEETING WILL BE PREPARED TO SUPPORT THE MEASURES WHICH CANADA CONSIDERS ESSENTIAL TO ASSURE ADEQUATE CONSERVATION OF THE FISH STOCKS OFF THE CANADIAN COAST. CANADA IS ALSO SEEKING SYMPATHETIC CONSIDERATION FOR ITS REQUEST FOR INCREASED ALLOCATIONS IN RESPECT OF CERTAIN STOCKS ON WHICH THE SURVIVAL OF CANADIAN COASTAL COMMUNITIES DEPENDS.

THE CANADIAN PROPOSALS FOR IMPROVED CONSERVATION ARE BORN OF THE CONVICTION THAT THE PRESENT ICNAF QUOTA SCHEME IS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
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NOT REPEAT NOT WORKING AND THAT NEW APPROACHES ARE NEEDED TO STEM THE CONTINUING DECLINE IN STOCKS. FOR MOST STOCKS, TOTAL ALLOWABLE CATCH LIMITS IN THE PAST HAVE BEEN SET AT UNREALISTICALLY HIGH LEVELS. ALTHOUGH SUCH LIMITS ARE RARELY APPROACHED (AND THEREFORE DO LITTLE TO RESTRAIN THE FISHERIES), CATCHES OF TRADITIONAL SPECIES SUCH AS COD AND FLATFISH HAVE CONTINUED TO DECLINE YEAR BY YEAR AND, ACCORDING TO SCIENTIFIC ASSESSMENTS, WILL PROBABLY CONTINUE TO DECLINE AT LEAST IN 1975 AND 1976. INDEED, IT IS LIKELY THAT 1975 CATCHES OF SUCH SPECIES WILL BE LITTLE MORE THAN HALF THOSE OF EARLIER YEARS.

IN CASTING DOUBTS ON THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PRESENT ICNAF QUOTA REGULATION SYSTEM, CANADA DRAWS ATTENTION TO THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT IN THE REPORT OF THE ASSESSMENT SUBCOMMITTEE OF ICNAF'S STANDING COMMITTEE ON RESEARCH AND STATISTICS: "THE WIDESPREAD REDUCTION IN TAC'S RECOMMENDED FOR 1976 IN THIS REPORT SUPPORT THE NEED FOR A CAUTIOUS APPROACH, AND THE SUBCOMMITTEE IS AWARE THAT THE LAG IN PROVIDING INFO (E.G. 1976 TAC'S SET ON THE BASIS OF 1974 DATA REFLECTING CHANGES IN THE FISHING FROM 1973) MAY PREVENT A SUFFICIENTLY RAPID (ADEQUATE) RESPONSE TO SECURE THE MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVE."

IN THE CANADIAN VIEW THE SCIENTISTS CONCERNS ARE FULLY JUSTIFIED. IN FACT, EVENTS HAVE OUTSTRIPPED THE ABILITY OF THE ANALYTICAL PROCESS TO PROVIDE A REALISTIC PICTURE OF THE CURRENT STATUS OF THE STOCKS. CANADA IS DISAPPOINTED THAT THE COMMISSION HAS FAILED TO HEED THE SCIENTISTS ADMONITION FOR A CAUTIOUS APPROACH. WHENEVER THE SCIENTISTS HAVE PROPOSED A RANGE OF ALLOWABLE CATCH LIMITS, THE COMMISSION ALMOST ALWAYS HAS CHOSEN THE

HIGHEST, LEAST RESTRICTIVE ONE. WHILE THE QUALITY OF SCIENTIFIC ASSESSMENT WITHIN ICNAF IS SECOND TO NONE IN THE WORLD, THE SCIENTISTS CAN ONLY WORK WITHIN THE TERMS OF REFERENCE SET BY THE COMMISSION AND CAN ONLY WORK WITH THE INFORMATION PROVIDED BY MEMBER STATES. AS A RESULT OF INCREASED SURVEILLANCE OVER THE PAST TWO YEARS UNDER THE ICNAF SCHEME OF JOINT ENFORCEMENT, IT IS NOW CLEAR THAT THE SCIENTISTS ABILITY TO PROVIDE ACCURATE ASSESS-
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MENTS HAS BEEN SERIOUSLY HAMPERED BY THE FAILURE OF SOME MEMBER COUNTRIES TO PROVIDE COMPLETE AND ACCURATE REPORTING OF STATISTICS OF CATCH (PARTICULARLY OF DISCARDED BY-CATCHES) AND ADEQUATE SAMPLING.

IN LIGHT OF THE FAILURES OF THE PRESENT SYSTEM, CANADA IS CONVINCED THAT AN IMMEDIATE REDUCTION IN FISHING MORTALITY, MOST EFFECTIVELY ACHIEVED THROUGH A REDUCTION IN FISHING EFFORT, BUTTRESSED BY A LOWERING OF TOTAL ALLOWABLE CATCH LIMITS, IS THE ONLY WAY TO HALT THE DECLINE OF THE STOCKS AND PERMIT THEIR REBUILDING TO FORMER, MORE PRODUCTIVE LEVELS.

SUCH MEASURES WOULD BRING BENEFITS NOT REPEAT NOT ONLY TO CANADIAN FISHERMEN, BUT TO FISHERMEN OF ALL COUNTRIES FISHING IN THE ICNAF AREA. FOR A NUMBER OF STOCKS FOR WHICH ADEQUATE DATA WERE AVAILABLE (COMPRISING ABOUT SIXTY PERCENT OF THE TOTAL GROUND FISH BIOMASS), ICNAF SCIENTISTS HAVE CONCLUDED THAT A FORTY PERCENT OVERALL REDUCTION IN GROUND FISH FISHING MORTALITY BELOW 1973

LEVELS, WHILE CAUSING A SHORT-TERM DECLINE IN CATCH, WOULD SOON PERMIT A REBUILDING OF STOCKS TO THE POINT WHERE SUSTAINABLE YIELDS ONLY 10 TO 20 PERCENT BELOW THOSE POSSIBLE UNDER THE PRESENT REGULATORY SCHEME WOULD BE ACHIEVED. YIELDS FROM CERTAIN DEPRESSED STOCKS WOULD BE HIGHER THAN PRESENT LEVELS. THUS, WITH ONLY SIXTY PERCENT OF RECENTLY APPLIED EFFORT, SUSTAINABLE CATCHES OF A SIMILAR ORDER OF MAGNITUDE CAN BE ACHIEVED IN THE FUTURE.

THE ADVANTAGES OF TAKING SUCH ACTION WOULD INCLUDE:

(A) CATCH PER UNIT EFFORT WOULD INCREASE SUBSTANTIALLY, THUS REDUCING FISHING COSTS

(B) THE FISH CAUGHT WOULD BE LARGER, THUS REDUCING PROCESSING COSTS AND INCREASING THE VALUE OF THE FINAL PRODUCT

(C) THE PRESENCE OF MORE YEAR-CLASSES WOULD INCREASE

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THE STABILITY OF THE FISHERY AND IMPROVE THE BASIS FOR PREDICTION OF CATCHES, AND

(D) THE PRESENCE OF MORE OLDER FISH WOULD INCREASE THE SPAWNING POPULATIONS AND REDUCE THE PROBABILITY OF POOR RECRUITMENT DUE TO SCARCITY OF SPAWNERS.

WITH THESE BENEFITS IN VIEW, AT THE COMMISSION'S ANNUAL MEETING IN EDINBURGH IN JUNE 1975, CANADA PROPOSED THAT FOR 1976 EACH MEMBER COUNTRY, EXCEPT THE COASTAL STATE, SHOULD REDUCE "THE NUMBER OF FISHING DAYS IN EACH ICNAF DIVISION (OR IN SOME CASES, GROUPS OF DIVISIONS) BY THEIR VESSELS IN EACH OF A NUMBER OF SIZE CATEGORIES. THESE REDUCTIONS WOULD BE A CERTAIN MINIMUM PERCENTAGE, ABOUT 40 PERCENT BELOW THE 1973 LEVEL FOR EACH YEAR AND SIZE CATEGORY OF VESSELS IN EACH DIVISION." IN RESPONSE TO VIEWS EXPRESSED AT EDINBURGH, CANADA HAS MODIFIED AND ELABORATED ITS PROPOSAL AND IS NOW PROPOSING:

-- THAT EFFORT BE REDUCED IN EACH OF FIVE GROUPS OF DIVISIONS (RATHER THAN IN EACH OF THE 13 DIVISIONS

-- THAT THE REDUCTION BE 45 PERCENT OF THE AVERAGE NUMBER OF FISHING DAYS APPLIED IN 1972-73 (APPROXIMATELY EQUIVALENT TO 40 PERCENT REDUCTION OF FISHING DAYS APPLIED IN 1973 ALONE)

-- THAT REDUCTIONS NOT REPEAT NOT BE REQUIRED FOR VESSEL

AND AREA CATEGORIES IN WHICH THERE WERE LESS THAN 200 FISHING DAYS ON THE AVERAGE IN 1972-73 (IN SUCH CASES EFFORT WOULD BE LIMITED TO NO REPEAT NO MORE THAN THE 1972-73 AVERAGE)

-- THAT REDUCTIONS FROM LEVELS ABOVE 200 FISHING DAYS NOT REPEAT NOT FALL BELOW 200 DAYS AND

-- THAT A SEPARATE SMALL ALLOWANCE OF FISHING DAYS (TO BE DECIDED AT THE SEPTEMBER MEETING) BE PROVIDED TO TAKE INTO ACCOUNT POSSIBLE FISHING BY NON REPEAT NON MEMBER NATIONS OR BY MEMBER NATIONS THAT DID LITTLE OR NO REPEAT NO FISHING IN THE AREA IN 1972-73.

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THESE MODIFIED PROPOSALS ARE BEINOMMISSIONERS DOCUMENTS. GOVERNMENT IN THE FORM OF CIANF COMMISSIONERS DOCUMENTS. CANADA BELIEVES THAT THE MODIFIED PROPOSALS WOULD PROVIDE A MORE EQUITABLE BASIS FOR THE EFFORT REDUCTION PROGRAM AND WOULD AVOID UNDUE DISRUPTION TO SMALL-SCALE FISHERIES BY A FEW VESSELS WHICH WOULD OCCUR IF THE EFFORT REDUCTION PROPOSAL WERE IMPLEMENTED ON AN ACROSS THE BOARD

BASIS. THESE FISHERIES ARE UNIMPORTANT IN THE OVERALL CONSERVATION PICTURE.

CANADA ALSO BELIEVES THAT SUCH AN EFFORT REDUCTION PROGRAM MUST BE REINFORCED BY REALISTIC TOTAL ALLOWABLE CATCH LIMITS TO PREVENT EXCESSIVE CONCENTRATION OF AVAILABLE EFFORT ON CERTAIN VULNERABLE STOCKS. TO THIS END ICNAF SCIENTISTS HAVE BEEN ASKED TO REASSESS INFORMATION ON A NUMBER OF STOCKS AND TO PROVIDE PROJECTIONS OF FUTURE CATCHES FROM THESE STOCKS UNDER DIFFERENT LEVELS OF FISHING MORTALITY. CANADA WILL CAREFULLY REVIEW THE RESULTS OF THESE REASSESSMENTS AND, ON THE BASIS OF THAT REVIEW, WILL PROPOSED SETTING TOTAL ALLOWABLE CATCH LIMITS FOR SUCH STOCKS AT LEVELS WHICH WILL ASSURE THEIR FUTURE HEALTH. AT THE SEPTEMBER ICNAF MEETING CANADA WILL FURTHER PROPOSE THAT TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR SCIENTIFIC ASSESSMENTS IN 1976 (WHICH WILL FORM THE BASIS FOR QUOTA RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE 1977 SEASON) BE RE-EXAMINED WITH A VIEW TO ASSURING THAT TOTAL ALLOWABLE CATCHES FOR ALL STOCKS IN 1977 ARE SET AT SAFE LEVELS.

CANADA NOTES THAT THE SEVERE CONSERVATION PROBLEMS WITHIN THE ICNAF AREA ARE NOT REPEAT NOT RESTRICTED TO SUB-AREAS 2, 3 AND 4, BUT OCCUR AS WELL IN SUB-AREA 1 (OFF THE GREENLAND COAST) AND IN SUB-AREA 5 AND STATISTICAL AREA 6 (OFF THE UNITED STATES COAST). CANADA FIRMLY SUPPORTS PROPOSALS BY THE US TO BRING ABOUT IMPROVED

CONSERVATION OF THE STOCKS IN THE LATTER TWO AREAS.

THE CANADIAN GOVERNMENT CANNOT REPEAT CANNOT OVER-
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ITS PROPOSALS BY ICNAF MEMBER NATIONS. FAILURE TO ACT
IN ACCORDANCE WITH THOSE PROPOSALS WILL RESULT IN
FURTHER STOCK DECLINES, TO THE DETRIMENT OF ALL. SUCH
FAILURE WOULD CAST GRAVE DOUBTS ON THE UTILITY OF
INTERNATIONAL COOPERATIVE APPROACHES TO THE MANAGEMENT
OF COASTAL FISHERIES. IN THAT EVENT THE GOVERNMENT OF
CANADA WOULD HAVE TO RECONSIDER ITS ATTITUDE WITH REGARD
TO ICNAF BOTH FOR THE PRESENT AND THE FUTURE. ON THE
OTHER HAND, EFFECTIVE CONSERVATION ACTION IN SEPTEMBER
WOULD ALLOW THE STOCKS TO BEGIN TO REBUILD AND SO PROVIDE
A STABLE FUTURE FOR THE FISHERIES AND ASSURE THAT A SUB-
STANTIAL SURPLUS OVER AND ABOVE THE COASTAL STATES NEEDS
WILL BE AVAILABLE FOR OTHER COUNTRIES FOLLOWING ANTICIPATED
EXTENSIONS OF FISHERIES JURISDICTION.

THE CANADIAN GOVERNMENT, THEREFORE, URGES ALL ICNAF
MEMBER GOVERNMENTS TO APPROACH THE SEPTEMBER MEETING IN

A SPIRIT OF COOPERATION, DEDICATED TO ASSURING A
BRIGHTER FUTURE FOR FISHERIES OFF THE CANADIAN COAST
FOR THE BENEFIT OF ALL. END TEXT. KISSINGER

NOTE BY OC/T: POUCHÉ MONTREAL.

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